

1 **WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

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3 1. A method of providing personalized information comprising:

4 a) providing a database comprising a plurality of contributor content records
5 and a plurality of contributor profile records, wherein each contributor
6 content record corresponds to a contributor profile record; and
7 wherein the database further comprises descriptor information
8 corresponding to the contributor content records;

9 b) obtaining a user profile record;

10 c) obtaining a user search query;

11 d) comparing the user search query with at least a portion of the descriptor
12 information;

13 e) comparing at least a portion of the user profile record with at least two
14 contributor profile records;

15 f) providing personalized information comprising contributor content records
16 based upon the results of the comparisons in (d) and (e) above.

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18 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising using information submitted by a
19 contributor to increase the number of contributor content records in the database, and
20 providing valuable consideration to the contributor in exchange for the submitted
21 information.

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23 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising varying the valuable consideration
24 provided to the contributor, based on the quality of the contributor's contributor content
25 records, wherein such quality is assessed by at least one user.

1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the database further comprises foundation
2 content comprising a plurality of guidebook content records, and descriptor information
3 corresponding to the guidebook content records, the method further comprising:

4 a) comparing the user search query and at least a portion of the user profile
5 record with at least a portion of the descriptor information
6 corresponding to a guidebook content record, and
7 b) providing additional personalized information comprising guidebook
8 content records based upon the results of the comparison in (a) above.

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10 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the database further comprises travel provider
11 content comprising a plurality of travel provider content records, and descriptor
12 information corresponding to the travel provider content records, the method further
13 comprising:

14 a) comparing the user search query and at least a portion of the user profile
15 record with at least a portion of the descriptor information
16 corresponding to each travel provider content record, and
17 b) providing additional personalized information comprising travel provider
18 content records based upon the results of the comparison in (a) above.

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20 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the user profile record and the contributor profile
21 records each comprise a plurality of corresponding data elements.

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23 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the plurality of corresponding data elements
24 comprises personal identification information, travel interests information, travel-related
25 attributes, dining and accommodation preference information, favorite destination
26 information, and aspired destination information.

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1 8. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of comparing at least a portion of the
2 user profile record with at least two contributor profile records comprises the steps of:

3 a) comparing a first data element of the user profile record with a
4 corresponding first data element of a first contributor profile record to
5 generate a first comparison score;

6 b) comparing a second data element of the user profile record with a
7 corresponding second data element of the first contributor profile
8 record to generate a second comparison score;

9 c) combining the generated comparison scores to calculate a first match
10 rating between the user profile record and the first contributor profile
11 record;

12 d) repeating steps (a) – (c) using a second contributor profile record to
13 calculate a match rating between the user profile record and the second
14 contributor profile record; and

15 e) using the calculated match ratings to provide the personalized information.

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17 9. A computer apparatus for providing personalized information comprising:

18 a) a database comprising a plurality of contributor content records, each
19 record corresponding to a contributor profile record, and each record
20 corresponding to descriptor information; and

21 b) a computer program adapted to receive a user profile record and a user
22 search query, the program comprising a content match algorithm
23 adapted to compare at least a portion of the user profile record with at
24 least a portion of at least two contributor profile records, and to
25 compare the user search query with at least a portion of the descriptor
26 information, such that there is generated personalized information
27 comprising contributor content records in response to the user search
28 query.

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1 10. The computer apparatus of claim 9, wherein the computer program is further
2 adapted to receive an additional contributor content record into the database, and to
3 provide valuable consideration to a contributor in exchange for the contributor's
4 provision of the additional contributor content record .

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6 11. The computer apparatus of claim 10, wherein the database further comprises
7 foundation content including travel guidebook content records, the guidebook content
8 records having corresponding descriptor information, and wherein the content match
9 algorithm is further adapted to compare the user search query and at least a portion of the
10 user profile record with at least a portion of the descriptor information corresponding to a
11 guidebook content record, allowing the computer program generate and provide to a user
12 additional personalized information comprising guidebook content records.

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14 12. The computer apparatus of claim 10, wherein the user profile record includes at
15 least two personal travel data elements related to a user, and wherein each contributor
16 profile record includes at least two corresponding personal travel data elements related to
17 a contributor.

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19 13. The computer apparatus of claim 12, wherein the user personal travel data
20 elements comprise information relating to the user's personal identification information,
21 travel interests information, travel-related attributes, and dining and accommodation
22 preference information; and wherein the contributor personal travel data elements
23 comprise information relating to the contributor's personal identification information,
24 travel interests information, travel-related attributes, and dining and accommodation
25 preference information.

1 14. The computer apparatus of claim 12, wherein the content match algorithm
2 compares at least a portion of the user profile record with at least a portion of a
3 contributor profile record by the steps of:

4 a) comparing a first personal travel data element of the user profile record
5 with a corresponding first personal travel data element of the
6 contributor profile record, and generating a first comparison score;
7 b) comparing a second personal travel data element of the user profile record
8 with a corresponding second personal travel data element of the
9 contributor profile record to generate a second comparison score; and
10 c) combining the generated comparison scores to calculate a match rating
11 between the user profile record and the contributor profile record.

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13 15. The computer apparatus of claim 14, wherein the step of combining each of the
14 generated comparison scores includes multiplying each generated comparison score by a
15 weighting factor to calculate a product, and adding each calculated product together to
16 calculate the match rating.

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18 16. The computer apparatus of claim 14, wherein the personalized information
19 comprises a displayed list of selected contributor content records, and for each content
20 record, an indicator of its relevance corresponding to its match rating.

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22 17. The computer apparatus of claim 14, wherein the personalized information
23 comprises a displayed list comprising selected contributor content records, the content
24 records displayed in an order relating to their relevance as determined by the match
25 ratings for each displayed content record.

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1 18. An Internet-based computer system for providing personalized information
2 comprising:

- 3 a) means for storing contributor records;
- 4 b) means for receiving a user profile record and a user search query;
- 5 c) means for comparing the user profile record and the user search query
6 with the contributor records; and
- 7 d) means for generating personalized information comprising selected
8 contributor content records based upon the user profile record and the
9 user search query.

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11 19. The computer system of claim 18, further comprising a means for receiving
12 additional contributor records, and a means for providing valuable consideration to a
13 contributor in exchange for the additional contributor records.

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15 20. The computer system of claim 19, further comprising means for receiving
16 foundation content; means for comparing the user profile record and the user search
17 query with the foundation content; and means for generating additional personalized
18 information comprising selected foundation content records based upon the user profile
19 record and the user search query.